

# Life

JOHN 10.10

How many of you have little children? Or grandchildren?

Have they ever taken a crayon or marker or pencil and just scribbled all over a piece of paper and then given it to you? Was there any significance in the scribbling?

Of course. It so clearly said, "I love you" or "Look at what I did" that you immediately post it on the refrigerator where everyone can see it.

Because it can be translated into meaning, then the scribbling – picture – artwork – had value and therefore purpose.

But for anyone other than a Mom or grandparent, the product is simply scribbling. It has no meaning, and, therefore, it has no significance.

Life is very much like that.

Life has significance only when it has meaning and it has meaning only when there is something that can and is communicated to give it purpose.

Most of the world, including science and education, teach that life has no meaning other than existence because life has no intrinsic meaning. In other words, the only meaning that can be found in life is in the meaning that we assign it.

But if life has no meaning, then what is the reason for our existence?

Are we simply an accident of the interaction of the galaxies following the Big Bang and of accidental or random interactions of chemicals after the worlds were formed?

Or are we here by design – created on purpose for a purpose by a Creator who has every intention of producing something in us and through us that only He can do?

There are many people who would argue that they do not believe in any existence beyond life – the things that can actually be experienced or observed – in other words, science. They would also argue that their life has meaning even without the knowledge of the origins of the universe or of life.

But what they really mean by that is that they can add meaning to life by setting goals and setting their minds on the achievement of those goals. The purpose of life then becomes the pursuit of happiness or wealth or sex or possibly even being the most charitable and altruistic person who ever lived.

Yet determining a purpose for one's life and setting goals does not answer the question of why we actually have life – why we exist in the first place.

If the answer to that question is that there is no answer to that question, then life has no purpose other than what an individual assigns to it and therefore it has no significance.

Therefore, every purpose becomes valid because, if life has no reason for existing, then it also has no standard to define acceptable purpose or for a correct moral basis other than what an individual assigns to it or what a society forces the individual to conform to.

So, a pursuit of charity and benevolence has nothing to commend it as more appropriate than the pursuit of wealth and selfish desires – even if that pursuit entails the suffering or even death of others.

If the answer to the meaning of life is "There isn't one," then it does not matter what you do.

If the answer is, "You get to decide your own meaning of life," then what are the standards by which a person might determine the best purpose for themselves?

An athlete who had reached the pinnacle of his sport was once asked what he wished someone would have told him when he first started playing his sport. He replied, "I wish that someone would have told me that when you reach the top, there's nothing there."

When life has no meaning or purpose, then it has no significance and becomes easy to take or to give up.

You would think that Christians would never struggle with such thoughts, and, indeed, they should not. Yet we are not very different from the world in these areas.

What separates us from the lost when as parents our primary desire is that our child graduate in the top of their class and we push them to go to college and to look for a career that will provide a significant income? We will ignore church in order to make sure that our children have access to all of the opportunities the world has to offer.

Then we wonder why they seem to choose the world when they get out on their own instead of staying in the church.

When we talk to our children about their life decisions, do we make it clear to them that there are no destinations in this life – that this world is simply our route to eternity with God?

When we discuss with our children about education, and college, and career choices, do we encourage them to set as a top priority an educational goal and an occupation that will allow them to dedicate their God-given talents and gifts for the glory of God and the furthering of the kingdom?

When we counsel with them about dating and marriage, do we tell them that marriage is a sacred contract with God – that the bond between spouses should make both stronger in their faith – not keep one from developing spiritually because the other just doesn't want to make the commitment?

Do we teach them that the only real purpose in having children is to create more disciples for Christ and worshippers who will give honor and glory to God?

It's really hard to be effective in teaching that to our children when we do not believe it or practice it ourselves.

When the meaning and purpose and significance of our lives are determined by possessions, and education, and jobs, by our houses and lands, our peers, and our earthly achievements, then

it is certain that we have little understanding of the calling of God on our lives.

Not only does our world struggle with the meaning of life, but we struggle equally as much with the definition of life.

Our society cannot tell you when a human life begins or when it ends. As a result, we believe that we can take a human life from the womb and destroy it without any repercussions from the God who created the life in the first place.

There are even those who believe that human life does not truly begin until the person – the child – has the capability of making moral decisions, which they place somewhere between the ages of 2 and 3, and thus it is permissible to terminate such a life without calling it murder.

I am not a scientist, but I remember some of what science taught me, and putting that knowledge to use makes the answer about when human life begins a relatively simple matter.

The human cell has 23 pairs of chromosomes. If we had 22 pair, we would all be rabbits, and if we had 24 we would all be apes. The make-up of our cells – the building blocks of the human body – define us as human.

The science book that I taught from in the 1980's identified five features of a living organism:

- Growth
- Consumption of energy
- Production of waste
- Response to the environment
- Reproduction

Most books now combine the consumption of energy and production of waste into one feature called metabolism, and add another feature called homeostasis – the ability of a living organism to modify itself on some level to remain within a set parameters or limitations.

So, the five markers of life are...

- Growth
- Metabolism
- Homeostasis
- Responsiveness
- Reproduction

Since a fertilized human cell exhibits all five of the markers of life, it is living. Because it has 23 pairs of chromosomes, it is therefore human. Since it exists, it “be.”

Therefore, the fertilized human egg is a living human being, and to destroy it is to commit homicide.

Not only does our world have trouble defining life, we also struggle with recognizing death.

Our technology has grown past our moral capability of handling the results. We can sustain a human body “alive” indefinitely with breathing machines and feeding tubes, medicines and brain-wave detectors, but we can’t come to a comfortable decision on when the person has actually ceased to be alive.

I am sure many of you have had to deal with the struggle of when a loved one’s life has actually ended. It is one of the most difficult things we have to do as humans.

The world may struggle with the meaning of life and the definition of life, but that is because we have ignored the Tree of Life and have paid more attention to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

In other words, if we truly want to understand the definition and the meaning of life, we need to get back to the Creator and study the Instruction Book He gave us to guide us.

When Adam partook of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, he fell under the sentence of death – not immediate physical death, but spiritual death.

That within him which separated him from all other living creatures – his spiritual nature – died. What had made him in the

image of God died and in its place came a void so vast that it is, in fact, infinite in size.

From that time until this, man has had an insatiable desire within him for satisfaction. Yet, in all of his attempts, he cannot fill up that vacuum in his soul with anything this world has to offer.

There was a song entitled “Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places,” but the problem we really have is that we are looking for life in all of the wrong places.

We might buy the fastest computer on the market, but within a couple of months, there is a faster one out and we want it.

HDTV was once thought to be the best thing ever invented in the area of entertainment, but I saw an article the other day that said HDTV is already obsolete and will be replaced by 3DTV, so that we will watch programs in three dimensions.

We live in a throw-away society. It’s why we have “Top 40” stations on the radio. We listen to a new song and, if we like it, we want to hear it over and over. Soon, we grow tired of it and go looking for another song.

We find the perfect mate, then, after some time has gone by, wonder if maybe we could have done better, so we start looking around for another one. As a result, half of the marriages in America end up in divorce. What makes this even sadder is that this statistic is as true inside the church as it is outside of it.

We struggle with the definition and the meaning of life and with finding satisfaction in our lives when the answer is so readily available.

***Gen. 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.***

The source of life is God. But with sin came death, which is not the exact opposite of life. Death is not the cessation of existence, but the separation of man from that which could satisfy his every desire – the God who created him in the first place.

Speaking of Jesus, John wrote...

**John 1:4** *In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*

**John 3:16** *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

**John 4:14** *But whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

**Matt. 6:25** *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*

**John 14:6** *Jesus said unto him (Thomas), I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me.*

**Matt. 7:14** *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.*

But one thing we need to realize is that real life does not come from professing Christ as Lord. It only begins there.

Real life in Christ is found in discipleship – being so yielded to Christ that every decision we make is measured by the standard of God's glory and holiness.

As soon as Adam was given a choice of trees, he chose the one that would provide him with something that he did not have. The provision of God became all about satisfying Adam. As a result, man has never been able to find satisfaction anywhere in this world.

That's because the only thing that will satisfy an infinitely big vacancy is an infinitely large God.

We have done the same thing to salvation that Adam did with the fruit of the Garden – we have made it all about us.

Dallas Willard has written a book entitled *The Great Omission*.

In it, he makes the point that the Great Commission directed us to make disciples and to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

What we have done is put all of our emphasis on making converts and baptizing them into the membership of the local church. But their conversion is soon a question since their membership often lapses into apathy, and we struggle to find them, let alone get them involved in ministry.

**John 10:10** *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

The context of this verse is Jesus' parable of the sheep fold. He says that His sheep recognize the voice of their shepherd and they follow him – that they will run in fear of the voice of someone who is not their shepherd.

How do these sheep come to recognize the voice of their shepherd? By spending time with him – by hearing his voice of calm reassurance and his warnings of danger and by his clear direction of the path they should travel.

This is why salvation is about so much more than just forgiveness of sin and rescue from hell. It is about worship and giving God the glory He desires.

**Matt. 10:39** *He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it.*

**Romans 2:6** *He will render to each one according to his works: 7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: 8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*

**Romans 6:22** *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**John 14:23** *Jesus answered and said unto him, **If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.***

**1 John 2:17** *And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

Now this may sound like I am teaching salvation by works, but that is not true.

The Bible very clearly says that we are saved by grace through faith.

But, as Dallas Willard pointed out in his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, “grace is not opposed to *effort* (in actions) but to *earning* (an attitude).”

#### **Dallas Willard**

Christlikeness of the inner being is not a merely human attainment, of course. It is, finally, a gift of grace. Nevertheless, well-informed human effort is indispensable. Spiritual formation in Christ is not a passive process. Grace does not make us passive. Divine grace is *God acting in our life to accomplish what we cannot do on our own*. It informs our being and actions and makes them effective in the wisdom and power of God.

**John 10:10** *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

Literally, that they may have abundance, or that which abounds.

Jesus comes, not just to give us a minimal life, but to add to that life in super-abundance all of the things that will make our lives full and blessed and happy.

He demonstrates perfect mercy by delivering us from hell, but His desire is to richly bless us in all areas of life – not with goods and riches and wealth – but with joy and peace and satisfaction that can only accompany a life that is everlasting.

He came, not merely to give us life, but that life would well up within us to the point that we become fountains of living water,

flowing out into the world to affect the lives of every person with whom we come into contact.

We are the light of the world because He is the light that lives in us.

We are life to the world because He has given us life – life to the limit.